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Testimony of The Connecticut Audubon Society regarding H.B. No. 6813 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEABIRD AND SHOREBIRD PROTECTION PROGRAM.

March 9th, 2023

The Connecticut Audubon Society would like to express its strong support for H.B. No. 6813 “An Act Authorizing the Establishment of a Seabird and Shorebird Protection Program.” This bill would grant authority for the designation and marking of seabird and shorebird protection areas along the state’s coast.

The Connecticut Audubon Society is a member of the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds and as such we work annually with The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Audubon Connecticut, and others to steward nesting and migrating shorebirds and seabirds along the coast of Connecticut. Dogs, both on-and-off-leash create a greater disturbance than humans alone. Dogs are viewed by these birds as predators and their simple presence on the beach can cause nest abandonment and failure. This includes the Piping Plover, which is listed as federally threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. We have had incidents of adult mortality in plovers due to off-leash dogs. As it is now, even though dogs are already prohibited from many of the key nesting beaches there is a lack of clarity on jurisdiction and enforcement. This legislation would clarify that municipal law enforcement and state Environmental Conservation Police would have the jurisdiction to enforce these rules.

Additionally, the issue of RTVs and other wheeled vehicles is a growing problem for these birds, which after hatching are free roaming, including on the beach edge outside of the string-fenced areas and are flightless for their first four weeks after hatching. RTVs and things like e-bikes pose a dire threat to the survival of these flightless chicks. Additionally we have had instances of people entering string fenced areas. This is a problem because these birds lay their eggs directly on the ground, relying only on camouflage for their protection. Any entry into string-fenced areas poses a risk to these birds nesting success.

Please help us to address this important issue by approving H.B. No. 6813. Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide input to this important proposal today.



Patrick M. Comins
Executive Director

The Connecticut Audubon Society protects Connecticut's birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through conservation, education, and advocacy. We envision that our efforts will lead to a future where all can share and experience the joys of nature and understand the importance of environmental preservation. Founded in 1898, we operate nature facilities in Fairfield, Milford, Pomfret, Hampton, Sherman, Stratford, the Greater Hartford Area and Old Lyme, and an EcoTravel office in Essex. We own and manage 22 preserves covering more than 3,400 acres in all areas of the state, and we work with landowners to help them manage their land for the benefit of birds and other wildlife.